
Conducting the W.I. Branch Meeting

FOR THE USE OF

Alberta Women's Institutes



Printed under the direction of the
Council of Alberta Women's
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CONDUCTING THE W.I. BRANCH MEETING

After the Women's Institute Branch has been properly organized and its officers elected following the 'Handbook' procedure, the regular meetings will be held. These may be held in a home of one of the members, in a hall or other public meeting place. The business should be conducted in a business like manner following general parliamentary procedure.

Parliamentary procedure is necessary at meetings in order that decisions may be reached in an orderly way and that courses of action decided upon may be carried out. Its basic foundations are common sense and common courtesy. In W.I. meetings we should try to follow Parliamentary procedure as far as it is possible, but it should not be exaggerated. Sometimes it is very difficult to keep a small club meeting formal, but it can be done with tact.

SOME DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT

The president of the W.I. Branch should have a thorough understanding of the Constitution and By-laws of the Women's Institute organization. She should make an effort to become acquainted with the rules of order, so that she will know just what is correct if necessary to be very formal and proper. But if the members are a bit shy or not accustomed to speaking in public, it is better to be informal and encourage all to enter into the discussions. In this the President will need to be tactful, courteous and patient while gradually introducing the formal procedures.

It is the duty of the President to preside at the meetings, but she should remember that while she is the chairman, she is not the 'Boss.' It is her task to see that the business of the meeting proceeds smoothly and that the program is completed and that the decisions made are really what the members want. To do that she must endeavor to

make certain that the members clearly understand what they are voting on and that the question has been well discussed. She must not hurry or 'railroad' things through, neither must she allow the meeting to dilly-dally along, digress or get out of control.

The President should arrive at the meeting early enough to look over the programme prepared by the Secretary as well as have a little chat with the members. The programme should be well arranged before hand and followed closely. If there is an outside special speaker and the President is to make the introduction, she should try to get some information about the guest in advance. A speech is not necessary to introduce a speaker—long, flattering introductions tend to embarrass the speaker and the audience will then react unfavorably. The name of the speaker should be given clearly, and the subject of her talk and enough about her to interest the audience.

When an outside speaker is invited to address the W.I. Branch meeting, be sure she knows how long you want her to speak, the exact time and place. If it is for an afternoon meeting, perhaps you would want to say something like this, "Our business meeting begins at three, our programme at four. If you are very busy you will not need to arrive until four, but we should be happy to have you with us the whole afternoon." If this last expression is omitted, your guest may feel that she is not welcome to sit in on your business meeting even though she might like to do so. When the meeting is over and the speaker is at home, a little thank you note is in order.

To the President who is inexperienced in conducting business meetings there are a few simple rules with which she should become familiar—

She should stand—

1. When she calls the meeting to order.

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2. When addressing the members, stating the business before the assembly or calling for a motion.

3. When she asks for discussion after stating the motion.

4. When she puts a motion to a vote, and when she announces the result.

5. When she recognizes a speaker and gives her the floor.

6. When she introduces a speaker.

She should sit—

1. After she recognizes a speaker, mentions her name or nods and the speaker rises to speak. This is a courtesy to the one who is speaking as well as a consideration for the president who should not be obliged to stand during an entire meeting.

THE MEETING

Promptly at the time set for opening the meeting, the President rises and, if necessary, raps for attention. She says, "The meeting will please come to order." Then, "We will now join in repeating the Creed." Perhaps it will be a song. Oh Canada, before the reading of the Creed. The President remains standing until she has announced the first item on the programme, whichever it is.

When the time comes for the minutes, the PRESIDENT: "The Secretary will please read the minutes of the last meeting." The Secretary rises and reads distinctly.

PRESIDENT: "Are there any corrections or omissions?" (pause) "If there are no corrections or omissions, I declare the minutes approved as read." However if a member rises, the PRESIDENT recognizes her by saying her name after which she is privileged to speak—"Madam President I suggest the following additions (or changes) and I move that they be made in the minutes." Another member remaining seated, seconds the motion. PRESIDENT: "You have heard the motion to add certain changes or additions to the minutes as recorded and read What

is your pleasure?" Pause. Then "All in favor of the motion?" The number is counted. "All opposed?" The number is counted and the PRESIDENT declares the result.

Another procedure regarding alteration of the minutes is as follows: a member rises, is recognized by the President, and then says: "Madam President, this (or that) correction or addition should be made." No seconder is necessary. PRESIDENT: "With the approval of the members the Secretary will make this correction." She pauses, then: "Are there further changes?" Pause, then: "There being no further changes, the minutes stand approved as read and amended."

The treasurer's report usually follows the reading of the minutes and their disposal. PRESIDENT: "We will now have the treasurer's report." After the reading of the report—PRESIDENT: "You have heard the treasurer's report. Will someone move its acceptance?" A member rises and moves its acceptance and another member, remaining seated, seconds the motion. PRESIDENT: "Any discussion?" "If not, all in favor of accepting the treasurer's report?" "All against?" "It is carried." The treasurer does not move the acceptance of her report because it has to do with money she has handled.

If other officers have reports, the same procedure is followed. Then come the reports of standing committees, regular or special committees. Each chairman may preface her report with "Madam President and Fellow Members . . ." If she is merely reporting progress in the work which is occupying her committee, she takes her seat when she is finished. If her report is a final one and recommends definite action, she may say at the close, "I move the adoption of this report." In the event that a chairman does not make a motion for the adoption of a final report the PRESIDENT says: "Will someone move that this report be adopted?" A member rising, says: "I move the adoption

of this report." Any member may second the motion without rising.

PRESIDENT: "It has been moved and seconded that this report be adopted. Is there any discussion?" A member says, "Question." But whether this is said or not the motion is put in the usual way, calling for those who are in favor and those opposed. As the vote indicates, the PRESIDENT says: "The motion is carried" or "The motion is lost."

PRESIDENT: "The business arising out of the minutes and reports will now be considered." One by one the items are announced by her and action taken upon them or reports made on them, as the case may be, by motions from the members.

PRESIDENT: "Is there any correspondence?" Having been told that there is she says: "The secretary will now read the letter from Mr. Blank." Following the reading of the letter, the PRESIDENT, "What is your pleasure concerning the request in Mr. Blank's letter?" A motion follows and voting on it as before. Then the next piece of correspondence is read. It is a letter from the Provincial President. After it is read the PRESIDENT says: "This information is important and one part calls for a decision of our members." (Names the part, dealing for example, with the Quilt Competition). "What is your pleasure concerning entering into this competition?" A member rises, is recognized, and says: "I move that our Institute members make a pieced quilt for this competition." Another member: "I second it." PRESIDENT: "we have a motion before us properly moved and seconded, that we make a pieced quilt for this competition, it is open for discussion." A member or two speaks in favor of the motion, a few others speak against it. When all discussion seems ended the PRESIDENT reads the motion and calls for the vote.

The next letter is from an outside organization asking for a donation of money. After it is read, a member rises, is recognized and says: "This appeal is a very worthy one, we

give to it individually and that organization has other means of raising funds outside those that our W.I. has, therefore I move that this letter be tabled." Another member seconds it. This motion is not debatable nor amendable so the PRESIDENT puts it immediately. If it carries, the next order of business is proceeded with. If the motion is lost, then a member says: "I move that we give \$10.00 to this fund." The usual procedure is taken on this and finally it is voted on. It is much better to move that such a matter be tabled than to make a negative motion such as "I move that we do not send any money to this organization." It is advisable to have motions made in the positive form since confusion may result from a motion not to do a certain thing.

Sometimes a President has a motion properly seconded before the meeting. The discussion is on and, for example, the motion is—"I move that we send ten dollars to this fund." Another member rises etc. and says: "I move an amendment to the motion, that the word 'ten' be deleted and 'twenty' inserted." PRESIDENT then calls for a seconder to the amendment and when one is obtained, PRESIDENT asks for a discussion on the amendment. Any discussion on the main motion is now out of order. When the discussion on the amendment is ended and the question is put, it is the amendment that is voted on first. PRESIDENT says: "All in favor of deleting the word 'ten' and inserting the word 'twenty' in the main motion." If the vote is in favor of the amendment the PRESIDENT says: "The motion as amended now reads, 'that we send \$20 to this fund.'" "All in favor of the motion as amended." "All opposed."

If the motion is lost, then the original motion is still open for discussion. When the discussion ends, the President reads the motion "that we send \$10 to this fund." It is then voted upon in the usual manner.

Another situation with which a President is sometimes faced might be as in the following—a member says: "I move that we send a \$10 donation to this Fund (naming it)." Another member says: "I move that we do not give anything to this fund." The President says: "The last motion is contrary to the main motion and if you do not want to send any money to the Fund, you can vote the main motion down. I cannot accept this motion." No member should feel hurt if her motion is defeated. Some people seem to feel that they have made a mistake or done something foolish if a motion that they have made is defeated. They should not feel that way. A motion brings before a meeting a suggested course of action and members should not feel that they are obliged to accept a motion just because it has been made. They are free to reject or approve, to delay deciding on it by tabling or amend by making changes in it.

If no seconder can be found for a motion, the meeting should not waste time discussing it—the President simply rules that the motion falls for lack of a seconder.

In dealing with unfinished business, PRESIDENT says: "Consideration of unfinished business is in order." She sums up as concisely as possible the various matters still awaiting action or decision. After each summary, she announces that the question is open for discussion. When the President feels that the members have covered all necessary angles, she rises and lets it be known that she is ready to entertain a motion authorizing the suggested action. A motion is made and procedure is as described before. It may be that the trend of the discussion leads the President to rise and say: "Since the general opinion seems to be against doing so and so, I suggest a motion be made to table the action." This motion must be moved and seconded as usual.

Sometimes a meeting has to be concluded at a definite time or the hostess is ready to serve lunch and a discussion is on with no

definite decision having been made. Someone moves that the meeting adjourn, it is seconded and, not being debatable, the motion is put immediately. A motion to adjourn is not debatable unless it specifies a certain time and place for the next meeting. The motion that was being discussed when adjournment was moved, should come up at the next meeting as unfinished business.

A tabled motion may be taken up on a majority vote to take it from the table at the same meeting at which it was laid on the table, provided other business has intervened. Or it may be taken up on a majority vote to take it from the table at the next regular meeting as the first business of the day. If either of these opportunities are not taken by the friends of the motion, it is dead. A tabled motion takes with it, its amendments and they are all revived or lost with the main motion.

All new business having been disposed of and any special announcements made, it is now time for the regular programme part of the meeting. The President may conduct this or turn it over to the programme committee chairman for the day's special programme. When the programme is concluded the President again takes the chair if the Programme Committee chairman has been presiding. The PRESIDENT says: "A motion to adjourn is in order." A member rises, "Madam President, I move we adjourn." Another member seconds the motion and the President says: "It has been moved and seconded that we adjourn. Those in favor will please say 'Aye.' Those opposed say 'No.' The 'Ayes' seem to have it. The meeting is adjourned." Voting may also be done by raising of hands.

The President of an organization, such as our Branch Institutes has a vote on all votes taken by ballot and if the vote results in a tie, she casts a vote to break the tie. The Parliamentary procedure usually followed is that in casting a tie vote, the chairman or president always votes with the 'nos' in order

that the subject may be brought up again. Usually in a voice vote, standing vote or show of hands, the President does not vote, but it is proper for her to do so if she desires.

SOME DUTIES OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT

The Vice President takes the chair in the absence of the President and all that applies to the President's duties shall apply equally to her. In large organizations, such as the Provincial Women's Institutes, the Vice-President represents the group at many meetings and functions which the President cannot attend. She will preside at some of the convention sessions and serve on committees. Even in the Women's Institute Branch, the wise President will see to it that the Vice-President has some definite duties to perform. She may be asked to introduce some speakers, move a vote of thanks or convene committees. When decisions have to be made between meetings, the President consults the Vice-President concerning them.

SOME DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY

In a Women's Institute Branch with a small membership, the secretary may combine the functions of treasurer, publicity convener or press reporter, and correspondence and recording secretary. In a branch with a larger membership, these tasks may be divided among a number of members.

The secretary prepares the agenda for the meeting and discusses it with the President before the meeting begins. The secretary records the proceedings of the meetings, the number of members and visitors present and the name of movers and seconders of motions, and any unfinished business as well as other items that may be useful for subsequent meetings. This record is termed "minutes"

Minutes are important in two ways. They are a record of the business for immediate reference and if they are carefully kept, they will become a history of the organization and part of the historic records of the community. The secretary should prepare the

minutes of each meeting as soon as possible after the meeting has been held.

The secretary should take all communications, correspondence, pamphlets, etc. received between meetings, with her to the meeting and read them at the request of the President. She should stand while reading the minutes or correspondence and speak in a clear, distinct voice.

The secretary may take part in all discussions and she is privileged to move or second a motion.

// The secretary shall prepare an annual report of the Institute for the annual meeting and a report to be read at the Constituency Conference.

After the election of her successor, the secretary shall, within ten days, hand over to her successor, all books, papers and records pertaining to her office.

SOME DUTIES OF THE TREASURER

The responsibility of the treasurer is to receive, preserve and pay out money for the W.I. Branch, and keep exact records of the transactions. She should give receipts for money received by her, and be careful to obtain receipts for all money spent. For the annual meeting, the treasurer's books should be audited by someone appointed by the members. Payments should be authorized by the members at a meeting where the motion is made and passed and recorded in the minutes.

The treasurer should never mix the funds of the Institute with her own personal account because it is so difficult to keep the records straight if that is done. If the treasurer is careful about details in keeping accounts, receipts etc., at the end of the year the books will balance without difficulty.

Within ten days after the election of her successor, all books, monies etc. pertaining to her office shall be handed over to her.

CONDUCTING THE SOCIAL GATHERING

The President of the Women's Institute is sometimes called upon to preside at a social

gathering. If it should be a concert, she is called upon to make a few remarks at the opening of the programme. She announces in a clear, distinct voice, the name of each participant on the programme and what each does. Following each performance, a word of commendation or praise may be given if it is not exaggerated to the point of embarrassment. At the close of the programme, she thanks all those taking part.

Sometimes the President of the Women's Institute is asked to act as chairman at a banquet. She is addressed as 'Madam Chairman' or 'Madam Toastmaster.' She takes her place at the head table and after the dinner, proposes the toast to the Queen. The Chairman rises, brings the audience to attention, and asks them to rise and drink a toast to Her Majesty. At this, the audience rises and the Chairman says: "Ladies and Gentlemen, 'The Queen'." Then and only then is the glass lifted from the table, held at eye level for a moment, and one sip of the liquid is taken, and the words, 'The Queen' repeated before the glass is replaced on the table. No other procedure is correct for a civilian pledging the health of Her Majesty. Glasses are never clinked for this toast. Guests must never smoke before this toast has been proposed. It is not correct to play or sing the National Anthem when a toast to Her Majesty is proposed.

The Chairman calls upon the proposers of and responders to other toasts, all of which have been settled upon before the dinner, for it is not fair to allow anyone to be called upon for a toast or response without a chance for preparation.

When a toast is proposed to the ladies and all are asked to rise and toast the ladies, all the ladies present remain seated—they are the ones being honored. When a toast is proposed to the Women's Institutes, all W.I. members remain seated since they are the members of the Women's Institute and are the ones being honored.



